

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 026

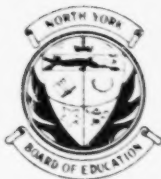
EA 018 860

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TITLE The Role of In-School Administrators in Bringing About Curricular Change: The Principal's Perspective.
INSTITUTION North York Board of Education, Willowdale (Ontario).
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Style; *Curriculum Design; *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; *Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Learning Strategies; Organizational Communication; *Principals; School Organization; Teacher Response
IDENTIFIERS *4MAT (Curriculum); *Ontario

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines, from the perspective of three school principals, the complexities involved in implementing a curriculum innovation, "4MAT," begun in Ontario in 1984. Curriculum project considerations include: leadership skills necessary; importance of support systems for principals; role of research; role of the principal; project implementation; and outcomes. Objectives include: raising staff awareness in learning styles; developing 4MAT-based curriculum; implementing 4MAT examples in the classroom; and improving staff communication. The paper reviews outcomes attributable thus far to implemented 4MAT units. Data collection assessed effects of 4MAT on students and the learning environment. Because standardized achievement tests were not appropriate measures for these short-term study units, each 4MAT unit contained a "teacher designed" evaluation component. Future scores could be compared with a control group. Student self-concept and attendance rates may change with this approach. A checklist will document classroom events that represent the four learning styles. Interviews with teachers and students may determine the usefulness of 4MAT. Results so far are that teachers are working together with greater facility and that curriculum is being written more systematically with 4MAT principles. Costs of curriculum change among the three schools have been heavy, but the effort has already paid dividends that will compound in 1986-88 and beyond. (CJH)

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THE ROLE OF IN-SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN BRINGING ABOUT CURRICULAR CHANGE

THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

by

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American Educational Research Association
1986 Annual Meeting
San Francisco

ED275026

EA 018 860

IMPLEMENTING 4MAT AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

PERSPECTIVE

This paper outlines, from the perspective of three Principals, the complexities and difficulties involved in implementing a major curriculum innovation, "4MAT", in the midst of having total responsibility for the administration and educational leadership of the three large secondary schools.

The paper considers:

- . the acquired personal and professional growth of the principals that aided implementation;
- . the leadership skills necessary for successful implementation of an innovation;
- . the nature and importance of support systems for the principals;
- . the role and importance of research for the successful implementation of the innovation;
- . the role of the principal in monitoring and maintaining the project;
- . the process used in implementing the innovation;
and ,
- . the outcomes to this point of the innovation.

INTRODUCTION

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

In the Spring of 1984, the principals of Nelson Boylen, Northview Heights and Georges Vanier and the Co-ordinator of Intermediate/Senior Education requested support from the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development Services for training the staffs of the three schools in the 4MAT system. A pilot project was approved for 150 members of staff, including Central Administration, to attend a four-day Summer Institute.

The following objectives were proposed for the project:

- To raise the awareness of the participating staff in learning styles and brain hemisphere preferences, and to become familiar with a delivery model developed from theory and research

- To encourage the development of 4MAT based curriculum;

- To accumulate examples of 4MAT implementation in the classroom;

- To improve staff attitude and communications toward improving program in and among the participating schools;

- To bring about a positive change in the learning environment;

- To monitor the progress of the project; and

- To report to the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development Services on the achievement of the objectives and plans for the future.

The Superintendent formally recognized our group as a Steering Committee for the project. This committee consisted of the Principals of the participating schools and the Co-ordinator of Intermediate/Senior Education. In addition, Dr. Michael Fullan of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (University of Toronto) was invited by the Superintendent to serve on the Committee as an adviser on the change process in education. The cost of the Summer Institute was underwritten by Curriculum and Staff Development Services.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Summer Institute was conducted by Susan Leflar of Excel, Inc. and attended by 152 members of staff (Vanier 57; Northview 45; Boylen 25; Curriculum and Staff Development 11; Senior Administration 3; other North York schools 9; others 2). Attendance was excellent and the evaluation forms indicated a good understanding of the concepts, an acceptance of the model as a feasible and practical approach to program implementation and an eagerness to get into the application of the theory. Ms. Leflar returned to North York in the fall of 1984 for a follow-up session with interested staff from the three schools.

The members of the Steering Committee met regularly during the 1984-85 school year to plan and monitor implementation progress and to consider future developments.

EARLY REVIEW

In June 1985, the Principals of the pilot schools conducted a review of the extent to which the objectives of the project had been achieved. The following is a summary of the findings:

From a total staff of 307 in the pilot schools, 175 teachers and administrators participated in formal and informal 4MAT training sessions. Of this 175, in terms of level of knowledge, 24% were at the awareness level; 44% the understanding level; 16% the application level; and 16% the adaption level. In terms of implementation, 25% have shown no evidence of use, 15% some evidence; 37% considerable evidence; and 23% extensive evidence. Of the 23%, eighteen staff demonstrated an interest and ability to provide leadership in the in-school implementation of 4MAT.

Each school had organized opportunities for staff to exchange experiences, to share ideas and to introduce new strategies involving 4MAT. These

activities resulted in improved communications among staff, and awareness of the need to respond to individual student learning styles and some program modifications. Feedback from staff indicated a need for additional staff development activities in 4MAT, not only for beginners but also for those wishing in-depth courses as in-school leaders and coaches.

Each school developed plans for future curriculum development activities in selected subject disciplines and co-operative training sessions were arranged through the Steering Committee.

In general, the Principals were satisfied that 4MAT had a positive impact on both learning and learning environment in their schools and that the project objectives were being met.

THE PRINCIPALS' SUPPORT FOR EACH OTHER

Given the complexities involved in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to become a principal responsible for the administrative and educational leadership of a secondary school, it is unrealistic to assume that all principals possess all of the skills needed to implement a major change such as 4MAT. During the 1970's, we who eventually became the principals of Boylen, Northview and Vanier took advantage of numerous leadership training opportunities offered by the North York Board of Education. This provided a common basis of shared personal and professional experiences, and thus we have been able to relate to each other at both the level of friendship and of professional collegiality. Throughout our careers in North York, there has been a curious mixture of chance happenings and of professional development experiences which have now facilitated the introduction of 4MAT.

The ideas identified in Douglas McGregor's "Theory Y" were attractive for us. The commitment to the concept that "people are interested in personal growth and development" led to further commitments to establish a school climate based upon the assumptions that people want to enjoy work, to seek responsibility, and to mature in a supportive and challenging environment. These beliefs which we held both individually and in common, tended to bring us together around the concepts involved in Organization Development. In fact, two of us met for the first time at an O.D. conference in 1973.

The philosophical commitment to O.D. is a shared belief system which has permeated our relationships and activities. The high value which O.D. places on both improving organizational effectiveness and on the self-actualization of individuals enabled us to work co-operatively and successfully in a wide variety of problem solving situations long before we became aware of 4MAT. In general, we grew together through the early days of sensitivity training to the more recent emphasis upon improving work group effectiveness. In so doing, we all acquired essential knowledge and leadership skills in areas such as goal clarification, planning, interpersonal communications, conflict resolution, problem solving, and team building.

By coincidence, each of us was vice-principal at Georges Vanier Secondary School, although we were all there at different times. The concerns which each of us experienced regarding unmotivated and underachieving students led to a variety of activities including the formation of an informal committee of teachers who shared those concerns. In December, 1983, two of us were at a conference sponsored by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation where we encountered Bernice McCarthy and 4MAT for the first time. These chance happenings, seemingly disconnected, were brought together for a positive outcome because of the practices resulting from the shared values mentioned earlier.

Through informal discussions which followed the conference we recognized that an appropriate level of readiness existed among many teachers in our schools and that there was a genuine opportunity to facilitate change in teachers' classrooms. Because of these shared beliefs, we responded proactively to the opportunity to attempt to implement a major change. When we learned that a 4MAT representative would be speaking at a nearby school board's professional development workshop, we arranged for ourselves to attend, and more importantly, for several teachers from the three schools to attend as well. Given the subsequent importance of these teachers in proselitizing 4MAT, it can be seen that their attendance and involvement in the preliminary discussion stages was a critical decision made correctly. It reflected our philosophical views.

As the principals began to plan the implementation, we soon realized we were embarking on a unique venture for which no precedent existed in North York. Traditionally, professional development activities for teachers were developmental in nature with little or no support for implementation, follow-up or evaluation. Principals usually competed with each other for resources and the provision of substitute teachers. A key decision was made by the very act of forming a steering committee under the leadership of the principals with other supportive personnel. The essential reason for the creation of this committee was to ensure that individuals and schools did not act independently in a competitive mode and that instead, resources including personnel would be pooled for professional development and perhaps research activities. Thus, in a somewhat inadvertant way, we formalized our own support system. This step has proven to be of utmost importance in implementing 4MAT at the school level. It has provided a mechanism for involving individuals with expertise in a variety of areas; some of these persons have been helpful in making the committee more

effective in accessing resources and support within North York. In addition the involvement of Dr. Michael Fullan has enabled us to acquire insights into the complexities of the various factors which probably determine the success of any attempted change. In short, there has been an effective combination of academic theory, knowledge of the North York system, and practical determination to persist and to be successful.

Although we do not yet claim to have fully implemented the 4MAT model in our schools' classrooms, we believe that the success we have attained has often been the result of our commitment to each other. On numerous occasions we have felt a lack of system support. This feeling was not the result of indifference to the planned implementation of 4MAT, but rather of an inability on the part of superintendents to grasp the enormity of the proposed change. We felt that there was little realization by the supraordinates of the importance of the innovation we were undertaking and we were frustrated in our attempts to enlist enthusiastic proactive support from senior administrators who were busy with their assigned responsibilities. On such occasions the shared collegiality has often rallied us to renewed commitments of time and energy; this internal validation has not come from external pressure, but rather from each other and the other members of the steering committee. This collegiality by its personal and professional nature has been of profound importance in achieving the success that has been gained to date. The recent promotion of one of us now constitutes a new challenge for the two of us remaining to integrate our newly appointed colleague.

INTERACTION WITH OTHERS IN THE SYSTEM

This area was one of the most problematic for the steering committee. Having decided that the introduction of 4MAT was a positive and much needed program for the teachers in our schools we were immediately faced with three significant questions: who would provide leadership for the steering committee at the system level; what type of direct support would there be for the implementation of 4MAT; how would the history of change in our Board impact on our endeavour?

LEADERSHIP

The proposal was first presented to the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development Services. The central liaison persons attached to the project were the Co-ordinator of Intermediate/Senior Education and a field Assistant Superintendent assigned part-time to the Curriculum Department. As a result of promotions or transfers and these people changed, the project suffered from the lack of a clearly identified leader and a senior staff support person. As a result, because the membership of the steering group was continually changing, frequent information sessions were necessary with individuals finding themselves at different levels of understanding and commitment. Another by-product was the need to clarify and renegotiate our roles within the group and more significantly the role of the steering committee in its interaction with the rest of the system.

The impact of this situation has been evident throughout the process and has translated itself into feelings of isolation on the part of the group and even at times lack of communication or miscommunication with others in the system. A recurring theme has been the need for continuity, clarity and stability in the process.

SYSTEM RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

When this proposal was first presented to the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development Services the dilemma which confronted him was how to rationalize a major investment of resources in one curriculum renewal project in three schools and still support other system initiatives. He also questioned the possible benefits the total system would derive from the introduction of 4MAT in three schools. Certainly these were not concerns that we had indentified for ourselves and although we were willing to share the results of the project with our colleagues, we intended to focus our energies on the activities in our three schools thinking that this would be a major undertaking and responsibility added to the already crowded schedule of a secondary school principal. Even so, at no point had we been able to foresee the enormity of this task and the drain that it would put on our time and energy. System recognition and support has had to be renegotiated annually through the budget exercises and there are a number of key players involved including centrally located superintendents. Although there was strong and clear support from individual senior administrators, we could not take for granted any significant continued financial allocation nor did the project appear in the long range plans of the system.

HISTORY OF CHANGE

At the secondary school level in North York there was no precedent for curriculum development, implementation and review of a major innovation in teacher classroom methodologies. This was further complicated by the proposed change involving only 3 of the 22 secondary schools. When searching for a paradigm or a successful instance in curricular change, we resorted to our own experience and perceptions. The identification of this

situation as a problem was crucial to the potential success of our project and it was for these reasons that we approached Dr. Michael Fullan. The steering committee thereby became the agents of change (or the implementors) as well as the students of Dr. Fullan.

Throughout, we were also keenly aware that although our system had been extremely successful in developing excellent and unique written curriculum, the record of implementation and evaluation was not positive. Indeed, senior administration was beginning to identify this area as an area of concern and activities were underway which eventually produced the Board's Curriculum Management Policy (Review, Development and Implementation). The gap between the curriculum department and the classroom teacher was often real, and the gap between written curriculum and implemented curriculum was often wide. As principals, we understood the need to learn the difficulties of implementation, of modelling helpful behaviour for our teachers and of guiding them through a difficult and often frustrating process to ensure that this experience was successful.

This last point is particularly important when working with mature staff who have developed a fair degree of skepticism when dealing with the introduction of an innovative new program. We identified the necessity to deal with blocking and avoidance behaviour and also to re-energize and remotivate our teachers once their initial enthusiasm weakened and they were faced with competing duties or incompatibly, entrenched habits. In retrospect, the absence of a set implementation model allowed us freedom to be creative and pragmatic in our planning and to act readily on the advice received from Dr. Michael Fullan.

We felt that if we were to be successful, we should not only implement this innovation, but also establish an effective model for curriculum implementation for our schools.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

The research of Dr. McCarthy was, of course, the foundation of the whole project. It gave us renewed hope that new ways could be found to improve the teaching/learning process for all of our students. We and our staff found that 4MAT validated and re-inforced our best teachers providing for them a new language to describe what previously could only be sensed. Dr. McCarthy's research had an energizing effect on our staff. From their first exposure to 4MAT theories their commitment to the pursuit of excellence in their teaching was renewed.

It should be noted that the personal contact throughout the life of the project between the principals and the researchers was and is of great importance. McCarthy and Leflar have made important re-entries to our project adding clarity to the 4MAT theories, and renewing our energy and vision of the project objectives. In addition, we and our staff were kept up to date in this rapidly developing field of research fostering in us a sense of relevancy and validity to our efforts.

Similarly, Dr. M. Fullen, through the sharing of his research on implementing educational change, has had a powerful and positive impact on our efforts. As the project evolved, he helped us to reflect upon the difficulties encountered and enabled us to articulate to the teachers how to avoid potential roadblocks and to help them become more aware of the process of implementing change.

As stated before we had never undertaken a project of this kind or complexity and we very much needed Dr. Fullan to help us translate theory into practice. We had seen too many instances where pre-service professional development saw little or no follow-up in-service. We were determined that our first attempt (the four day awareness workshop) would not be a single event but rather the beginning of a long process of change. Throughout the first and very critical four months following the Summer Institute Dr. Fullan's advice was used to rewarding advantage.

The research of Dr. G. Hall and associates also played an important role, helping us to shape our action plans for Staff Development, recognizing the need for pre-Service, in-Service and coaching activities. Our application of his CBAM instrument to all of our staff has allowed us to better understand their relative awareness and concerns and to plan ongoing professional development around their individual needs.

NORTH YORK RESEARCH PROJECT

In the fall of 1986 the Steering Committee decided that beyond the personal perceptions of the Principals (found in the June '85 report) our progress relative to our objectives needed a more thorough and objective evaluation. In co-operation with NORTH YORK'S RESEARCH Department a research proposal was developed.

Dr. Marcus Lieberman's knowledge and advice played a large role in the development of our approach to the project, and he continues to be a resource to the Steering Committee.

The 4MAT research proposal has had an extremely positive effect on the momentum and quality of our activities having re-newed the energies and commitment of our staff at a critical and difficult phase of the project.

Of particular interest and excitement for the principals is the emergence of a team of coaches (teachers helping other teachers). They have become the Research Project's Steering Committee responsible for its management at the staff level.

Central to their role is their coaching of other teachers as they develop and write 4MAT units. Validation of these units is a further responsibility as is the coaching of teachers, where after field testing, revision is found to be needed.

This shift of reliance from external experts to in-school leaders is perhaps the most important indication that the implementation plan has paid dividends.

A REVIEW OF OUTCOMES

The most significant component of this research study is the review or evaluation of outcomes attributable to the 4MAT system, i.e. "approved" 4MAT units being implemented in the three schools. The overall approach will be a comparison of the intent of the model to actual practice and a determination of whether or not the objectives of the project were achieved. In the process, it is hoped that we will also identify barriers to curriculum delivery and unintended outcomes.

Specifically, the multi-faceted approach proposed below describes data collection procedures aimed at assessing the effects of 4MAT on both the students and the learning environment.

1. Effects on Students

a) Change in Academic Performance

Although standardized achievement tests would not be appropriate measures for these short-term units of study, it is expected that each 4MAT unit would contain some form of "teacher-designed" evaluation component which relates specifically to the content of the unit. The scores obtained on such measures could be examined in some of the following ways:

- . comparison with a control group who were taught the same content using other conventional methods
- . compare performance in the units with marks in that particular subject area overall. Is there any significant improvement/decline with 4MAT units?
- . identify each child's learning style using the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) and determine whether the 4MAT system is effective consistently across all four groups or whether it favours one
- . any other student characteristics (e.g. colour) which have an effect on results?

b) Change in other School-Related Behaviours

Other student behaviours may change as an indirect result of exposure to the 4MAT approach to learning, particularly if students begin to feel more positive about their learning experiences at school. A few examples and the corresponding sources of information follow. Others may be added.

- . student self concept (North York Self Concept Inventory)
- . class attendance patterns (school records)
- . drop-out rates from course compared to previous years (school records)
- . others?

2. Effects on the Learning Environment

a) Classroom Observation

An observation checklist will be designed to document what actually occurs in a 4MAT classroom. The content of the checklist would essentially be a list of criteria/activities which represent each of the four learning styles as well as right and left brain functions which should be occurring in the classroom. These practices would be rated as "definitely occurred", "somewhat occurred" and "did not occur".

Observations would have to be based on the entire study unit rather than one random period and would best be conducted by peers.

b) Organization of Curriculum

Either through observation and/or interviews with principals and teachers, some descriptive information will be compiled about how 4MAT is managed within classrooms, departments and/or the school. Changes in curricular organization? New roles and responsibilities (e.g. in-school leaders or coaches)? Changes in school operation?

3. Perception Surveys (Principals, Teachers and Students)

Surveys and/or interviews of both teachers and students will be valuable on students as well as its effects on the learning environment. Some typical areas for questioning would be:

- . what do you like about 4MAT/most useful?
- . what don't you like/least useful?
- . what differences in the classroom, e.g. set-up, methods, environment, how different from other classes?
- . what changes in self/students? (examples provided)
- . what is required to maintain momentum, encourage teachers to do this on their own?
- . unforeseen consequences, etc.

CONCLUSION

The principals are now faced with the need to initiate, maintain and support activities of several hundred staff, some who are at the pre-service level, others who require further in-service, while the more advanced need advanced coaching techniques. This cyclical demand on us and our system's resources is not yet fully understood by our system, however, we feel that we have taken tremendous strides in the two and one half years of the project. We look forward to positive results both for the young people in our schools and the staff who work with them.

We perceive that teachers are working with other teachers with greater facility than before, resulting in increased sharing of their expertise. Curriculum is being written in a more systematic mode by staff incorporating 4MAT principles into sophisticated course design models. We observe an increase in cross communication of teachers of the three schools resulting in the formation of curriculum writing teams.

The most significant review of outcomes attributable to the 4MAT system will be derived from the research project. The overall approach will be a comparison of the intent of the model to actual practice.

The introduction of the curriculum change, 4MAT, to our three schools has exacted a heavy price, both in terms of dollars and human energy but, from our perspective, those costs have already paid dividends, which will begin rapidly to compound in 1986-88 and beyond.